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Bopp

Dene against Development ? - 7

BEFORE

THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF THE NORMAN WELLS OIL PIPELINE APPLICATION

NEB ORDER OH-2-80

PUBLIC INTEREST & SOCIO-ECONOMIC MATTERS

THE DENE NATION

P.O. Box 2338

Yellowknife, N.W.T. X0E 1H0

PREPARED EVIDENCE OF:

Georges Erasmus - President, Dene Nation
 Herb Norwegian - Vice-President, Dene Nation
 Paul Andrew - Vice-President, Dene Nation

These three people are the Executive of
 the Dene Nation.

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d'd: Aug 20/82
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 Acc. No: Mr. Bopp

1. Q. What are your full names and occupations?

A. Georges Erasmus, Herb Norwegian and Paul Andrew,
being respectively, the President and Vice-Presidents
of the Dene Nation. We are the Executive of the
Dene Nation speaking for the Dene.

2. Q. What is the main point of your evidence?

A. We have to begin by saying that we find these
hearings a mockery, a disgrace to this country.
We think that if the Canadian Government was acting
in the most just and legal manner that we would
not have to be going through this exercise at this
time.

The reason that we are saying this is because the
Canadian Government has no authority to be deciding
whether or not there should be a pipeline from Norman
Wells. The National Energy Board has no right to
be holding these hearings as far as we are concerned.
The only authority that the Canadian Government now
has is to negotiate with the Dene.

Because there is so little apparent understanding
here about what is going on, we must make it very clear
what is really going on, and talk about Dene rights.

3. Q. What do you mean by Dene rights?

A. When we talk about Dene rights, or what some people call "land claims", let us get it really clear what is going on. The Dene Nation does not have a "land claim". What we are dealing with is "claims" that are being made by institutions like Imperial Oil saying that they own an oilfield on Dene land. We are dealing with a "claim" of a country called Canada claiming that it owns Dene land. We are dealing with the "claim" of the National Energy Board that it has the authority to decide whether or not, and on what conditions, our resources should be developed.

The Dene do not have a land claim. We have never given up our land. We have never given up the right to our sovereignty. We have never given up the right for our institutions to decide whether or not our resources are going to be developed.

4. Q. What are your views on the Berger Inquiry?

A. We have said everything we wished to say to Mr. Justice Berger, and we know that he said only three years ago that no pipeline should be built in the Mackenzie Valley for ten years. These hearings are a mistake because the Government of Canada cannot ignore the process that happened with the Berger Inquiry. It was a process which was very thorough. There wasn't just discussion of the conditions on which a pipeline should be built. We discussed the fact that European

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2 nations came to North America, stuck a flag on it,
3 and claimed it for themselves and then proceeded to
4 establish their societies here, to take over entirely
5 and to colonize the Native People of this country.
6 We discussed our political rights and the Berger Report
7 said our rights should be respected.

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9 5. Q. How does this relate to your understanding of Canada's
10 position on human rights?

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12 A. Now in the 1980's, Canada is one of the leading
13 countries in the international society for human
14 rights and that indicates it cannot continue to have
15 colonies, it cannot continue to colonize the Dene
16 when we are clearly saying that we don't want it to
17 continue. As far as we are concerned, building
18 pipelines on our land against our will would constitute
19 genocide, political genocide and cultural genocide.

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21 6. Q. What is your understanding of the treaties?

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23 A. Our people never consciously or otherwise gave up
24 the right to decide what is going to happen on this
25 land. We signed Peace Treaties with European descendents.
26 Our understanding of those Treaties was that we would
27 allow non-Dene to come to our land, to live amongst
28 us, but not for non-Dene to come and establish
29 institutions that would then decide how our resources
30 are going to be developed; not to let Dene institutions

be undermined by foreign institutions that would then
make laws for us, but that has continued to happen.
We told all this to Judge Morrow and he too listened
to us carefully. Why must we keep doing this? Is
the Government of Canada deaf?

Prior to the European contact, we had a complete society
We had our own language; we had our own way of making
clothing; we had our own social structure; we had our
own religious belief; we had our own political institutions.
We had a complete way of life.

7. Q. What has been the impact of EuroCanadian society on the
Dene?

A. What has happened is other institutions have been
imposed upon us and slowly what has happened to the
~~Dene is that there are now contradictions amongst us~~
that we are not of our own doing. You will find in
every community conflicting institutions, institutions
that have been brought here by the European descendents
and institutions that have survived from the Dene society.
This has led to continuous breakdown. We have high
alcoholism. We have high family breakdown. We have
child neglect. We have divorces amongst our people
that we never had before. We have high suicide rates.
And this is because there is no assurance of a Dene
future of any kind. We have no guarantees; we have no

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control; and a very good example is this pipeline.

If you want to start a mine next to this community,
or if you want to start a community next to this
community, we have no control.

8. Q. How do you see this pipeline proposal?

A. This particular development is just one more in a
long series. You may try to look at this effect
singularly, isolate it from the rest. If there is
a suicide that starts three weeks after you start this
pipeline, is it something that you will attribute
to that pipeline or will it be the dam that was built
two years ago or the mine that was built five years
ago? It doesn't matter to the Dene. We are still
losing people.

One thing that the Dene really take as an insult is
when some fellow or some company is there looking
with greedy eyes at a resource that the Dene have lived
on for 30,000 years and this person then just develops
it, exploits it, at a certain time because the market
is right. So the Dene will come and say: who is going
to get the benefits from these resources; and the Dene
goes on to say: we don't like this project to go
ahead, whether it is a mine or an oilfield. We say
we don't want it to go ahead under these conditions,
and that ripoff artist stands there and says Dene are

standing in the way of progress, that you guys are
not being realistic. And that is a lot of rot. We
are talking about absolutely clear-cut theft.

9. Q. Are the Dene against development?

A. The issue here is not whether or not the Dene are
against development. There is not a human being
anywhere that is against the betterment of human
society unless that person has lost most of his
faculties. As for the resources that are on Dene
land, if the Dene ever get the kind of control of our
resources that we seek, everything, whether it is
a renewable resource or non-renewable resource, will
be developed.

10. Q. What is your major concern with respect to resource
development?

A. Obviously our major concern will be that when that
resource is developed it has some major benefits for
our people. That is what we are concerned about.

But it is absolutely clear to us that under the
present conditions, any development adds to what is
already going on, and this pipeline that is being
discussed will be the gateway to further exploration,
further development.

We don't have the luxury of sitting down and pretending, the way the National Energy Board does that the world works in complete isolation from one piece of development to another, because we know that it does not. We are fully aware that if developers believe that the North is again open game, they can go into the North, they begin to plan for all the pipelines they want. They can plan for all the mining development they want. We are fully aware that that is just the beginning of another round of exploitation and we are resolved to call a stop to it now.

11. Q. What does this do to Northern society?

A. What I really find pitiful about what is going on in the North is how easily the different parts of Northern society can be made to turn our guns on each other.

We have in the North the Inuit that have been here for countless centuries and the Dene have been here for countless centuries. We also have long-term residents that come from neither of these people, and we have a lot of transient people that have plugged into the institutions that have been brought from the South, institutions that are either here to colonize the Dene or the Inuit, institutions that are here to exploit the resources that lie in the North.

We have a very small Northern business society. About
99.9 percent of that business society happens to be
non-Native.

The Northern economy, very much like Canadian economy
in all of the provinces, is not even owned by Canadians.
Small business here like everywhere else hangs on to
the coattails of multi-nationals. When Exxon -- which
controls Imperial Oil, which control Esso Resources and
Interprovincial Pipelines -- sneezes, small businesses
go bankrupt.

What we are seeing once again in the North is small
businesses deciding that in the short term, the absolute
immediate future in the next two or three years, their
future lies with Exxon and not with Northern society.
Not with the possibility of working together so that
we can get control in the North, so that as people
living in the North like anywhere else in this country
and anywhere else in this world, we will decide when the
resources of the North are going to be developed and
who will benefit and on what condition those resources
will be developed. It is absolutely sad to see what is
going on.

There are some of us in the North that have not learned
the most basic kind of element of negotiations, or in
fact anything about actions that will change the present
situation of the North. A basic lesson that all

of we people who live in the North and call it our
home should have learned by now is that the enemy does
not lie among us in the North. The culprit has always
been Ottawa and very large companies that will tend to
have an international game plan of which the North is
only a small part.

So long as it looks like the North is divided, companies
like Exxon are laughing. We have business begging
for a few pennies and we have other sections of Northern
society saying: "We are being ripped off, we are being
led down the garden path".

12. Q. Do you see any any analogy between what the Dene are
saying and what for example, Albertans are saying?

A. For those developers that have not yet learned to
listen to us, they should look to what Premier Lougheed
is doing and how they have to listen to him. Albertans
already have a provincial government. They already
have control of their resources, and the dispute that
is now going on between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Lougheed
and the Western Provinces is absolutely no different
to what is going on in Northern Canada. Anyone that
deals with elementary basic politics and attempts to
say that the Dene are trying to stop development, and
deals with it only in racist terms, does not understand
what is going on. The issue is exactly the same.

The President of Imperial Oil mentioned a day or two ago on the radio that in five years oil will be \$50 a barrel or more. The issue is that the North is not going to benefit from that and we will not benefit from any resource in the North until we get control of our resources like Alberta and the provinces already have. We have been attempting to lay the foundation, to get control in the North. We have attempted to reach an agreement between the major political bodies in the North.

The leadership of the North needs the support of the community and it needs the support of the white society just as much as it does the Dene society. We have a challenge before us in the North. We don't have to make the same mistakes that have been made all across this country in dealing with Native People. We Dene are the majority of the permanent residents of the Mackenzie Valley. Our rights must be entrenched now as part of the settlement of our claim. This must be done before this pipeline can be discussed. Anything else does prejudice to our claim.

13. Q. What is your view of the corporations that promote projects like this pipeline?

A. I am speaking here to the North because I don't think there is any use talking to representatives of multinational corporations. They operate only on the basis

of profits.

We have had two meetings with Esso Resources and Imperial Oil. We have tried to deal logically with that organization. We have explained very clearly, very vividly what will happen to the North, to the society up here; and that there is no way that anyone can tell me or any of the Dene or the people in the North that there will not be bad socio-economic impact.

No one can convince us of that because it will happen. It is happening. We think that what is important is that we in the North must realize that the only hope is if we work together. It is in Ottawa's interest that the North stay divided. The North is the last place that Ottawa can still decide when resources are going to be developed and on what condition, and so long as we do not develop a credible front and we are presented around the world as if a Dene cannot speak to a non-Dene intelligently, our interests are absolutely diametrically opposed to each other, we will never get anywhere. One faction of the North will continue to be used against the other.

I think for a very long time we aboriginal people have been shouldering the movement of self-determination for the North by ourselves and it is about time that the non-Dene, if they are going to make the North their home, shoulder part of the responsibility and see that "get

rich quick¹⁴ projects like the Norman Wells oilfields
are nothing more than a continuing ripoff of a future
that we could all share in the North.

A while ago, Lougheed made it very clear that if
Trudeau puts an export tax on gas that Alberta sells
to the United States, Trudeau is declaring war on
Alberta.

In the North the aboriginal people know what war is
about because we have been under attack for a long
time. We have many casualties to show that and it is
time that that section of society in the North that
lives in a very privileged, sheltered, cushioned
situation where they have the highest paying jobs,
they have the best housing, they have guaranteed holidays
in the South, it is time that they understand what is
really going on and quit being used, quit being made
little pawns in a game that is bigger than the North,
bigger than Canada.

14. Q. What is the relationship between the Dene Nation and
the Territorial Government?

A. We are working with the Executive of the Territorial
Government and Territorial Council. The North must
act in exactly the same way the rest of Canada is
acting. We must protect our land; we must protect
our people; we must make sure that if the resources

that belong to us in the North are developed, we have
guaranteed benefits.

And the other thing that must be understood clearly
by everyone in the North, if this development goes
ahead the non-Dene are so well cushioned that they
will not feel the impact like the Dene will.

We Dene will once again contribute with our lives
so that someone in some boardroom somewhere can look
at their profits once more and say: "We didn't do
too bad in the North".

And every time that an individual stands up and supports
this pipeline, we really want them to be aware of
what he or she is doing. We want the individuals that
are representing institutions, whether they are economic
or political institutions, in the North, when they
are saying that there will be no adverse impact from
this pipeline, to be aware that they are part of the
problem and they must be ready to shoulder the responsi-
bility of what will follow.

15. Q. What is the major conclusion of your evidence?

A. We want to make it clear that the Dene Nation is
going to do everything and anything it can to stop
this pipeline, and we are going to ask and demand the
support of the Territorial Government; but most

important we need the support of the non-Dene, particularly
in Yellowknife and other centres like Yellowknife.

The Government of the Northwest Territories, the Dene
Nation and the Metis Association have for some time
looked at this project and seen clearly that at this
time it will not contribute to the self-determination
of the North.

The agenda of the North is to settle the question of
what sort of Government we will have in the North
which we will be happy with. Only a Government in the
North freely accepted by the Dene will have the authority
to control the homeland of the Dene, will have the power
to decide when the resources are going to be developed
and on what conditions.

A long, long outstanding issue which should have been
dealt with at the commencement of this country that is
known around the world as Canada, is the question of
aboriginal rights. The eyes of the world are once
again on the North. We know what the Dene are going
to do. What people are asking is: "What will the
non-Dene do?".

A lot of people are taking educated guesses. The
Dene are prepared to go to court, to go to any ends
to stop this particular pipeline. The question is,
if the Territorial Government decides to do the same

thing, if the five points that we jointly presented
to Mr. Munroe in the Federal Government are not in
any way dealt with, and the Territorial Government
decides to also go to court to obstruct this pipeline,
the question still is what will the non-Dene population
do? Will they support their leadership and invest in the
future, or will they once more be blinded with the
glittering fool's gold that is in front of them being
paraded as if there are great benefits from rapid,
uncontrolled development?

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